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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant: Andrew T. Busey and Gerald H. Weghorst, Jr.
Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR EMBEDDING CHAT
FUNCTIONS IN A WEB PAGE
Serial No: 08/768,606 Filed: December 18, 1996
Examiner: [Not Assigned] Group Art Unit: 2411

November 13, 1997

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
Washington, D.C. 20231

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Sir:

Applicants wish to call to the examiner's attention the following information as to specific chat services and methods.

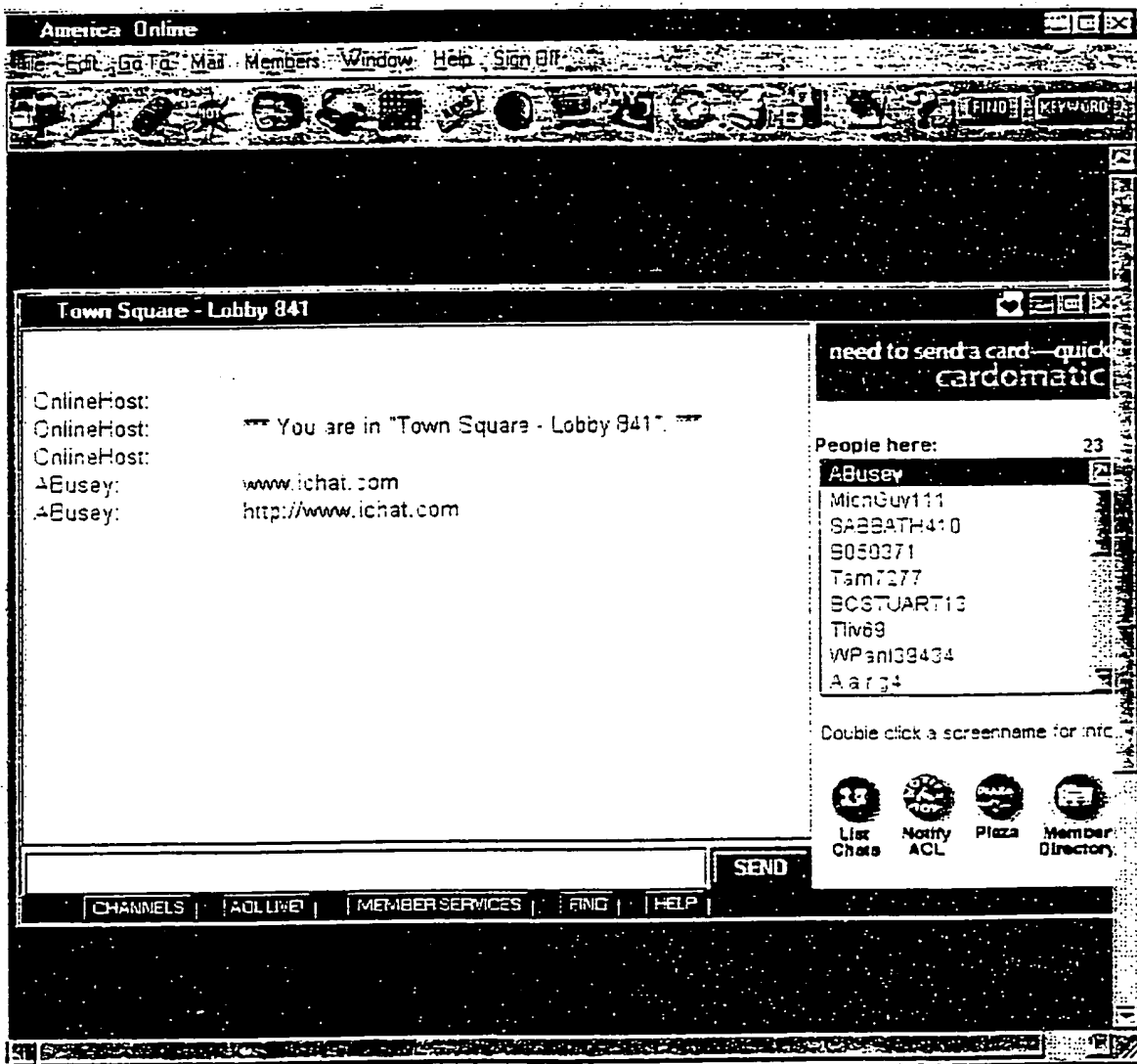
America Online

The most active chat forum, America Online ("AOL") uses a proprietary chat system that is part of its subscription online service. AOL's proprietary chat is primarily available in the People Connection part of the service, but is also as an added feature in various forums. AOL's chat comes up in a floating window, independent of AOL's online service "browser." It does not run embedded in the "browser." "Browser" in this case is defined as a piece of software that takes some markup language and then organizes and assemble graphics and text based on that markup language. "Browser" is also thought of as being a Web browser, which is of the more specific "browser" type in that it specifically uses the HTML markup language as opposed to the proprietary markup language that AOL uses.

AOL has had chat rooms for quite some time, over four years. AOL's chat rooms are realtime in nature. They have no integration with the Web whatsoever. There is no facility for transferring hyperlinks and there is no awareness of the Web by the chat client or server.



Example of AOL Chat



Compuserve and Other Early Chat Systems

Compuserve's chat has been around for over ten years, even longer than AOL's chat. It is similar to most early chat systems. To connect to Compuserve or a bulletin board system (BBS) you launched a standard telecommunications client and connected via modem. This allowed only one connection at a time rather than the multi-connection model that TCP/IP and AOL allow. This meant you could either chat or do something else, but not both. Compuserve has since added a commercial client but not with the robustness for supporting multiple simultaneous applications. Compuserve and some proprietary BBS systems support real-time chat.



Internet Chat Systems

Internet chat systems work in much the same way as proprietary BBSs, except that they allow TCP/IP connections and some of them are based on standards. Users generally connect to these kind of chat systems through a text based client that is part of the standard UNIX shell (telnet or irc) which allows them to run one primary chat session, but allows them to switch between sessions because of UNIX's multi-processing capabilities. The two primary forms of Internet chat are Multiple User Domains ("MUDs") and Internet Relay Chat ("IRC").

MUDs (including MUDs, MOOs, MUSEs, and other systems of similar design) are primarily oriented toward game play or world building. They are completely text based and until recently have had no web integration. Users connect to a MUD via a telnet client either from a UNIX shell or from a Windows, Mac, or other operating specific stand alone client. MUDs are real-time. Recently, MUDs have been partially integrated with the web - this primarily means that they are using special web servers to display MUD rooms and people embedded in web pages without the chat element. MUDs are real-time.

EXAMPLE: Telnet to realms.dorsai.org 1501 or telnet://realms.dorsai.org 1501

IRC is similar in many ways to MUDs. IRC is real-time and is generally not web integrated. Users generally connect to IRC either via a text client in their UNIX shell or via a special client that utilizes the IRC protocol. There are specialized IRC clients for most major operating systems. The first web integration seen on IRC clients was a way to launch them from a web page using a specially configured URL.

EXAMPLE: connecting to an IRC chat would require downloading a special client or having access to a UNIX system with a text-based IRC client.

Web-Based Chat Systems

The Web as we know it today (Mosaic and Netscape) came into being in late 1993 and started to become popular in mid-1994. Web-based chat systems started appearing in very late 1994 and early 1995. These were primarily built on CGI technology. CGI technology utilizes the idea of forms inside of a web page. A user fills in a form on their Web browser and then the Web browser posts the completed form data to a CGI script (the standard for posting form data).

The CGI script then takes some action based on its programming (usually written in C, C++, or PERL) and the form data that was posted. The end result is that it usually either creates a dynamic Web page (created on the fly from the form data and CGI program) or redirects the user to another URL. Webchat systems, as these web-based CGI chat systems are sometimes called, are not real-time. They take all the chat messages that people submit (via CGI), append it to the end of a document and then send the new document back to the user. The user thus sees their chat message and any other chat messages that have been posted since the user's last message

was posted. Alternately the user can push the web browser's reload button or hit a special web page button that forces the page to be reloaded from the server, showing all new chat messages that have been posted.

As web browser technologies have evolved, two advancements have happened. First, the web browser can now be configured (usually through special HTML embedded in the web page) to automatically reload the page at certain time intervals (usually 1-10 minutes). Second, because Java has become common in Web browsers, some sites now offer Java chat clients that resemble real-time connections to a webchat system by constantly polling the web server and doing refreshes in Java. While appearing to be real-time, the polling technique is still an HTTP connection.

EXAMPLE: <http://www.wbs.net> - the WebChat Broadcasting Service is a large, CGI-based chat site.

Closing

As this Statement is filed within three (3) months of the filing of the application or before the mailing date of a first Office action on the merits, whichever is last, no fee is due or certification required.

Citation of the above-referenced documents shall not be construed as an admission that the documents are necessarily prior art with respect to the instant invention. Citation of the above documents shall not be construed as a representation that a search has been made, other than as described above. Also, the citation of the above-referenced documents shall not be construed as an admission that the information cited herein is, or is considered to be, material to patentability as defined in § 1.56(b).

Respectfully submitted,

BROBECK, PHLEGER & HARRISON LLP



Michael A. Davis, Jr., Reg. No. 35,488
Attorney for Applicants

Brobeck, Phleger & Harrison LLP
301 Congress Avenue, Suite 1200
Austin, Texas 78701
Tel. (512) 479-2910
Fax (512) 477-5422

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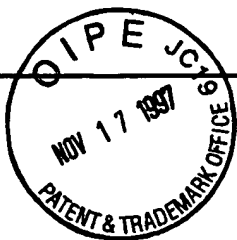
Examiner

[Not Assigned]

Group Art Unit

2411

Invention: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR EMBEDDING CHAT FUNCTIONS IN A WEB PAGE

I hereby certify that this Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement

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